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Intersectionality in language trajectories: African women in Spain

Abstract: During the last decades, changing intra-state and inter-state immigrant profiles in Spain has generated an interesting landscape for sociolinguistics research. There has been a shift from temporary migration to permanent settlement, which means that there is an increasing number of individuals who need to speak the locally legitimate forms of language for different reasons. Apart from this, recent statistics indicate that female immigrants' profiles are also changing, and they are becoming more and more forerunners and active participants in the formal Spanish labour market (Aja et al. 2011). Therefore, this dynamic, ever changing profile of female immigrants suggests that they move across existing boundaries, acquiring and developing their linguistic knowledge to access other forms of symbolic capitals in Spain. Building on my ethnography of two sites in Madrid and Barcelona between 2011 and 2014, I shall explain how African immigrant women become new speakers and how their language learning process intersects with socially constructed boundaries such as political, economic, and linguistic hierarchies and ascribed gender roles.


Keywords: female new speakers, transnational immigrants, language learning and intersectionality

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1 Introduction

In literature, a lot of terms have been used to describe the *new speaker phenomenon*: neospeaker, second language speaker, second language learner, and adult learner are some of them. Regarding the linguistic repertoires of transnational migrants, questions such as mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are now main concerns regarding the language groups (Blommaert and Rampton 2011: 3) and concepts such as 'linguistic repertoire' (Blommaert

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and Backus 2011), ‘communities of practice’ or ‘networks’ are used in order to challenge essentialist binary positions of speakers and to represent the mobile, flexible features of language in contemporary world. Puigdevall (2014) suggests that the new speakers’ phenomenon questions the dominant linguistic ideologies of early modernity and it challenges the idea that legitimate national identities are built on the identification between language, culture and territory. Relevantly, recent studies that investigate different profiles of new speakers in different landscapes also challenge this narrow ethnicization of languages. Studies in different regions such as Galicia (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013), the Basque country (Ortega et al. 2014), Catalonia (Pujolar and González 2012) and Ireland (Walsh and O’Rourke 2014) confirm that new speakers in these settings claim ownership over the language and challenge the binary positions between the native speaker and the new speaker. Therefore, the emergence of the term new speaker aims to move away from the traditional linguistic dichotomies such as native and non-native or first-language and second language; it emphasizes the need to understand a new communicative order, new types of speakers, and new forms of language emerging in the modern era.

Longitudinal ethnographic research may shed light on the specific ways that new speakerness or linguistic repertoire is bound up with social, economic and political constructions. In this article, I call for a *material turn* in analysing language trajectories and I conceptualize new speaker as a socially-constructed subject whose linguistic trajectory passes through different social, political, economic and identity constructs and boundaries. The specific aim of this article is to explain how Moroccan immigrant women become new speakers in the Madrid and Barcelona regions and how their social positioning creates different models of new speakers in different stages of their lives. Taking two fieldwork sites in Madrid and Barcelona, I shall explain their *process of becoming a new speaker* on the basis of in-depth life-history interviews. This focus on their trajectories will shed light in a longitudinal perspective on the specific ways that learners seek to accumulate social and cultural capital and also on the reproduction of unequal social relations in contemporary structures of inequality.

This article is built on a set of qualitative data collected between 2011 and 2014 in Spanish and Catalan language classes oriented to female immigrants in Madrid and Catalonia. Madrid language courses were situated in an industrial town¹ in the southern region of the city and this language program was organized by an NGO whereas the Catalan language courses were located in a town in the north of the Barcelona city and the courses were organized by the local municipality. During my fieldwork, I worked as a volunteer language teacher

¹ In this paper, proper names and specific information about these two fields are omitted.

and used different techniques in order to find out how these agents were developing their linguistic trajectories and how they constructed this experience in their narratives. I conducted in depth life history interviews, classroom recordings, discussion sessions and participant observation in both fields. As I will explain in detail during the following sections, the diversity of the immigrant profiles helped me to reveal the complexity of becoming a new speaker in the contemporary world, and to characterize the multiple hegemonies that the informants come across in their trajectories.

Accordingly, this article is organized in the following way: First I shall explain the theoretical considerations regarding intersectionality in relation to new speakers and after this I shall describe the main hierarchies and boundaries that new speakers come across throughout their migration trajectory. I shall start with the linguistic hierarchies constructed in both Morocco and Spain, and I will show how the inequalities constructed in Morocco get reinforced in the language classrooms in Spain. Following this, I shall point out the political and economic hierarchies and demands that shape the immigration influx from Morocco to Spain. I aim to indicate how changing labour force demands in Spain, together with the political/economic environment, are linked to the emergence of various new speaker profiles such as the female new speakers who need the language to become an active member of the labour market in Spain. Finally, I shall explain how ascribed gender roles trigger different new speaker models and how language can be a tool for women's emancipation, as well as oppression.

2 Globalization and complexity in the language trajectories of female new speakers

In contemporary research on transnationalism, transnational subjects are described as individuals who “have collective homes away from home” (Clifford 1994: 308) and they embody a *third space* that challenges stable and permanent identities, suggesting the emergence of shifting experiences of displacement and reterritorialization (Bhabha 1994). The transnational subject lives simultaneously in two countries, engages in economic, social cultural and political activities across borders, and may contribute to the nation-building processes of both her countries of origin and those of immigration (Basch et al. 1994). Harvey (1989) states that contemporary post-national economic strategies, flexible system of accumulation and the new organization of capital in the world may constitute the bedrock for new forms of transnationalism. Insecure jobs and low wages, the reorganization of capital based on flexibility and time-space compression (in

Harvey's terms) urge immigrant communities to rely on two or more countries to secure a living for themselves and their families (Basch et al. 1994).

Why do new forms of transnationalism help to explain the linguistic agencies of adult female immigrants? The answer involves how this new socio-economic structure is responsible for increased immigration, feminization of the labour force, rising stratification, and the spread of informal work in the capitalist industrial west (Sassen 1998), such that female immigrants deploy linguistic resources in specific ways in this new socio-economic world order. Immigrant women are becoming more visible actors in social and economic terrains in receiving and also in sending countries, and their linguistic agencies are becoming more and more complex. Therefore, a longitudinal analysis of the linguistic repertoires of female new speakers must show this complexity.

In this article, the notions of trajectory and complexity are introduced in the theoretical and analytic framework in order to achieve two main objectives. First, I shall underline the complexity of learner profiles (social, economic, linguistic and cultural background, their expectations and motivations regarding language learning) and second, I shall highlight the complexity of oppression in their trajectories by means of highlighting interconnected systems of oppression, domination and discrimination encountered in the biographical narratives of the female learners. The main idea is that under late capitalism, transnational language learning experiences of one person differ from that of another person because of the individual's place across lines of oppression and exploitation, and, language as a form of capital is implicated in these oppressions. This idea suggests that it may be useful to revisit the concept of intersectionality as a theoretical and analytic tool.

Intersectionality was developed especially by black feminists who suggested that biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion and other axes of identity interact on multiple levels and contribute to systematic injustice and social inequality. Intersectionality stresses the interconnected nature of these categories and describes how they mutually strengthen or weaken each other (Crenshaw 1989). Nevertheless, although the term received an increasing interest in gender studies and other social sciences, how to study intersectionality is a problematic question due to the scarce feminist writings on its methodology. McCall (2005) proposes three analytic approaches to intersectionality: antecategorical complexity, intercategorical complexity and intracategorical complexity. The main difference between these approaches is that in the first one the categories are deconstructed suggesting that social life is too complicated to be categorized; the second approach suggests using the existing analytic categories in order to underline inequalities among social groups; and the

third approach acknowledges the social categories but it maintains a critical stance towards them. McCall mentions that the researchers adopting the third approach mainly focus on “the neglected points of intersection” in order to show the complexity of the lived experience (p. 1774). In this article, intersectionality is used to reveal these “neglected points of intersection” in language trajectories of the learners, which I consider as an overlooked research area in sociolinguistics. While an increasing number of studies focus on the learner profiles rather than language, there are very few studies that describe how language trajectories are connected to multi-layered hegemonies or oppressions. More specifically, socially constructed categories such as social class, marital status, and gender roles are considered to work together to monetize, invest, capitalize or decapitalize linguistic capital or ascribe specific ideologies on language.

3 Moving across linguistic hierarchies

The link between the legitimate language of the host society and the inequalities experienced by immigrants is built on the idea that language is a symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991) and that the immigrant population claims this capital to reach other forms of symbolic and socioeconomic capitals. Bourdieu explains that official languages are bound up with the state and the process of state formation in ways that create the conditions for the constitution of a unified linguistic market that is dominated by these varieties (p. 44). Therefore I assume that immigrant learners’ integration into a linguistic community is a struggle for access to this capital and for legitimacy as a new speaker. Studies focusing on gatekeeping in institutions (Sarangi and Roberts 1999; Codó 2008) or inequalities constructed in primary and secondary schools (Martin Rojo 2000, 2010) problematize so-called linguistic or social integration discourses in the receiving countries and highlight the struggles over language and symbolic capital.

The social and linguistic trajectories of my informants indicate that this struggle was present in different stages of their lives, including their country of origin. They moved from one set of sociolinguistic hierarchies in Morocco to another set of hierarchies in Spain. In order to understand how my informants moved between these socially constructed linguistic hierarchies, I shall explain the linguistic ecologies of major sending areas in Morocco. In Figure 1 and Figure 2 below, you will see two maps, one indicating the major home regions of the learners and the other one indicating the linguistic map of Morocco:



Figure 1: Major birth places of the research participants.

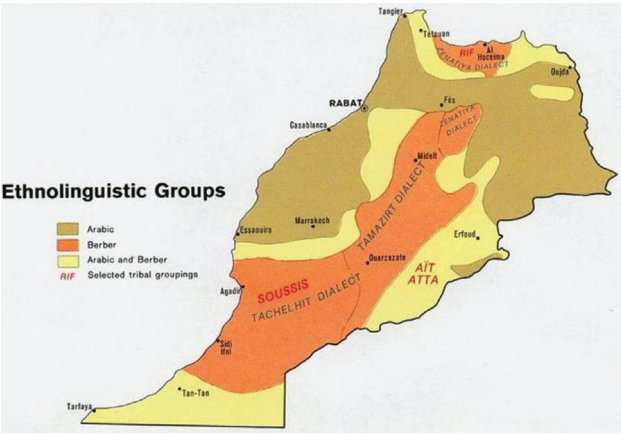


Figure 2: Linguistic Map of Morocco.

Among the 70 learners I met in Madrid and Barcelona, a great majority were originally from the northern areas of Morocco, where international mobility is much more common than the rest of the country. Mobility towards Europe was promoted by the Moroccan Kingdom in the post-colonial period, also in the context of marked *Arabization* policies. During this linguistic unification movement, Berber speaking areas were institutionally encouraged to emigrate

(De Mas 1978), which explains why there was a considerable number of Berber speakers in the classes that I studied. The ethno-linguistic asymmetries that existed in Morocco were then reproduced in these classrooms, for instance by the fact that Berber speakers generally had not received any formal linguistic education (note that Darija, which is the Moroccan dialect of Arabic, is the dominant language in Morocco and Berber was recognized as an official language in Morocco in 2011), and most of the Berber speakers in particular were illiterate. Therefore, the majority of the learners in the alphabetization classroom were speakers of Berber who already carried the marks of linguistic inequality in their home state. More specifically, this asymmetry reproduced power asymmetries in Spain regarding issues such as access to formal education, and in the position of their cultural and linguistic capital in relation to those that were dominant in the state.

Learners also varied in the foreign language capital acquired before migration. Especially among the younger generations, French was a common second language and some of the learners, especially those who resided in the northern areas of Morocco, had studied Spanish before they immigrated to Spain. De Haas and Vezzoli (2013) explains that migration flows from Morocco to the other European countries is closely tied to the colonization period of the Maghreb region and to the dominion of France and Spain over the Moroccan territory from 1912 to 1956. While France had historically controlled the heartland of Morocco, the Spanish dominion was limited to the southern Western Sahara and the northern Rif mountain zone (de Haas 2005, 13). France's superior position in the Moroccan land and the introduction of the French language in administrative and educational areas triggered the transformation of Morocco into a supplier of low-skilled workers to fill France's labour demands after independence. As a result, the French language is still strong and widely taught in Moroccan schools in spite of the growing importance of English in the public and private sectors. On the other hand, Spanish is spoken and taught in the northern areas of the country, where familiarity with the Spanish radios and TVs is also common. This explains why especially the young informants from middle-class families had received French classes at school and a few of them had also learned Spanish before their arrival to Spain.

However, holding a linguistic capital does not necessarily mean that this capital is, as Norton (2000) would state, *invested*. In other words, their linguistic knowledge was undervalued or challenged by the dominant language market in Spain. Martín Rojo (2013) conceptualizes this process as (de)capitalization. She explains that linguistic assets that the immigrant population holds (such as Arabic) are undervalued in the Spanish school system. Qualitative data suggest

that this under-valuation took place in many stages of the lives of my informants, but this process was more visible among the learners who went through socio-economic de-classing after immigration. See the excerpt below, indicating the job-seeking process of Nadia (33 at the time of the fieldwork in 2012), who held a law degree from a Moroccan university:

Excerpt 1.

People say that women can always find a job, but in my case I haven't found any. Cleaning jobs, I haven't found any. In factories, neither. I looked everywhere, in all directions. I think things have changed for everybody (...) I have been looking for a job in agencies, on internet, and I always have a photo without veil in my curriculum and I haven't found anything. I went to the industrial zones, went to the restaurants to give my curriculum. There is nothing. There are many women like me. Before the crisis the situation was different. There are many people who live in Spain for many years. They never thought about looking for a job but now they are. But they can't find anything.

(Interview with Nadia, August 2012 Madrid, my translation from Spanish)

Apart from her unsuccessful trials to get her law degree recognized in Spain, the de-classing process of Nadia also included de-capitalization of her French and Spanish skills acquired before immigrating to Spain. When she started looking for a job after the birth of her son in 2009 she realized that her law degree and linguistic skills were to no avail. Therefore, she decided to develop a more marketable curriculum and started gathering certificates for her feminized skills. She took classes in elderly care, child-care programs, and cooking courses during 2011 and 2012. In some sense, however, her learning Spanish was a necessary means in the process of de-skilling, as the language was used precisely to develop the capability to get lower-paid feminized employment. We therefore have the paradox that the acquisition of the local linguistic capital was part and parcel of her process of de-capitalization and de-classing.

Furthermore, qualitative data collected in Catalonia indicate that the local linguistic market also produces obstacles and at the same time opens up alternative paths which are congruent with local social hierarchies. In bilingual Catalonia, there is an ambivalence of whether it is Spanish or Catalan or both that count as the legitimate linguistic capital. There are also contradictions in the definition of who the legitimate speaker of Catalan is (Pujolar 2009; Woolard 2003). In any case, my one-year-long ethnography indicated that the Catalan knowledge is systematically under-distributed to the female immigrant population in cost-free language classes and the course materials

and the classroom content were highly gender-biased (Caglitutuncgil 2014). Moreover, interviews with the two working women indicated that the linguistic knowledge of the female workers was under-valued by the employers and these women received contradictory linguistic demands from the host community. Immigrant women acquiring the locally valid forms of capital must then take up the positions that the host society made available. The case of Catalonia provides another example of how this can happen, as local linguistic ideologies there had some specificities. Below you will see the experience of Fariha (28 at the time of the interview in 2013) who received contradictory linguistic demands in bilingual Catalonia:

Excerpt 2.

Tulay: Did she ever ask you why you were learning Catalan?

Fariha: Yes. Yes, because she was from Andalusia, you know? It is a very different language. Catalan people are Catalan. Now I am working for a Catalan woman and she always tells me “I hope you spoke Catalan, it is better that there is no Spanish in my house”. But the other lady, she was from Andalusia and she always told me “I hope you didn’t speak Catalan, Spanish is better”. Her daughter, who was working as a police officer always in Barcelona told me “Fariha, Catalan is valid only here in Barcelona. When you cross the Catalan border, there is no Catalan. If you don’t know the Spanish language you will have problems”. I told her “Yes, you are right”. When I go to Ceuta, for example, everything is Castilian. Actually, I wanted to study Spanish when I first came to Catalonia. The only language class that I found was alphabetization level and I already knew the alphabet, you know? And then I couldn’t find any other Spanish class and started learning Catalan, there was no other option.”

(Interview with Fariha, December 2013 Barcelona,
my translation from Spanish)

This excerpt shows that Fariha was expected to speak both Spanish and Catalan by different employers. She responded to these demands by studying Catalan regularly in the language classroom (note however that during the interview she spoke an advanced level Spanish). The excerpt also illustrates how Fariha constructed the value of the two languages by framing them within a global perspective: Spanish was constructed as a language closer to a global dimension while Catalan and other territorial minority languages of Spain were constructed as local. Additionally, and also at a local level, although the authorities promote the use of the Catalan language, the linguistic socialization of immigrants was

dominated by the Spanish language (which sometimes they had already learned in Morocco). Therefore, Fariha's reference to Ceuta and her preference to study Spanish rather than Catalan indicates that, with regard to the local and national languages and its articulation on linguistic socialization, immigrant women preferred to take a global rather than a local perspective. The linguistic demands that she received from different social actors indicate that the power struggles over the language (Spanish vs. Catalan in this case) could challenge the immigrant learners when the social actors tried to impose their nationalist ideologies on the immigrant population by means of encouraging or forcing them to learn and speak the language that represent their political, linguistic or nationalist stance.

4 Moving across political-economic barriers

In order to explain how the immigrant new speaker profiles are constructed, it is crucial to understand the political-economic links between the two countries throughout history. As I briefly explained in the previous pages, the colonial history of Morocco and Spain has been a driving force regarding the linguistic markets constructed in both countries. Spain is a recent immigrant receiving country which prepared the first law on immigration not earlier than 1985 (La Ley Orgánica de Extranjería de 1985). During the first decades the immigration issue was seen as a temporary phenomenon and until 2000s, the Spanish law provided no regular work permit system or family reunification procedures. Since the 2000s, the Spanish policy and discourse on immigration showed an important change and there were repeated attempts to regularize immigrants. The 2000 law, different from the previous ones, included the rights and the liberties of the immigrants and their social integration (La Ley Organica 4/2000 de los derechos y libertades de los extranjeros y su integración social) in an extended way. This law covered important issues such as free judicial assistance, positive silence for renovation of the work permits, possibility of working in public administration and participation of the NGOs to help the immigrants with the administrative and legal procedures. Now the government was making settlement policies and they were also initiating integration programs which also included language education for the second generation immigrant children (special classes for them in the school system) and first generation adult immigrant language learning.

Economic and demographic data explains the reasons of the Spanish State's regularization efforts, changing discourses on migration and including

integration and language in the immigration policies. From 2000 to 2009, Spain's foreign-born population increased from less than 4 percent of the total population to almost 14 percent. Arangó (2013) explains this growth as reflecting the dynamic economic growth of Spain, which between the mid-1990s and 2007 was above the European Union (EU) average. As the native population aged, there was a high demand for foreign labour, largely to fill low or semi-skilled jobs. In his report he states that during that time immigration was seen as a requirement of the labour market and the immigrants were economically and socially accepted because they were considered to be necessary. Therefore, there was a growing (mostly male) working class immigrant population and their female partners who came to Spain through family reunification, and who became an important new speaker profile in Spain.

Both in the Madrid and Barcelona settings, more than 95% of the informants came to Spain after marrying a male immigrant worker. I have met and interviewed only three women who came to Spain in other circumstances (looking for a job in Spain or family reunification with parents). However, even though they came to Spain as followers of male workers, immigrant women might become active members of the formal and informal labour market. Below, Aisha (62 at the time of the interview in 2012) explains how the immigrant women found domestic jobs in Madrid in 2005, before the crisis:

Excerpt 3.

Aisha: The Spanish people they come to look for women workers (.) They take them to work. I work in the house of-of Victoria do the:- clean the dust (.) a:nd cook (.).

Tulay: But, a question. Did th- the Spanish look for people to=

Aisha: = Ye:s, before.

Tulay: Ah, yes?

Aisha: In the: four- the:-e:h la Baguada.

Tulay: Yes?

Aisha: Yes, the lady comes, tells the Moroccan, Hello yes hello. Wait, wait (.) do yo- you want to work? If she works.

Tulay: Ye:s.

Aisha: Many of them work. If they don't want to work they say no no. Me work no.

(Interview with Aisha, June 2011. My literary translation from Spanish)

Aisha, the only retired informant among the 70 women I interviewed or observed was born in a rural area in the Rif. Speaker of Riffian and Spanish, she didn't receive any formal education in Morocco and was illiterate when

she came to Spain. Although she had been living in Spain for more than 15 years, she was still learning Spanish and the Arabic alphabet and she still had difficulties in reading and writing. She acquired her Spanish skills mainly in her workplace and her lack of fluency in Spanish raises doubts about the linguistic socialization of immigrant women in the Spanish labour market.

Relevantly, the economic crisis triggered major changes in the linguistic agencies of the immigrants. The Spanish economy started to suffer from the economic crisis in 2007, which caused a significant reduction in labour demand and this reduction was also accompanied by strict border controls and limited immigration opportunities from Morocco to Europe. In Spain, voluntary return programs were launched by the PSOE (socialist party) and later by PP (right-wing party). However, the economic restrictions and these voluntary return programs did not lead to massive returns (Fix et al. 2009) and especially most of the Moroccan immigrants decided to stay (Aja et al. 2012). More importantly, this new neoliberal economic order resulted in major structural changes in the immigrant labour market such as the feminization of this market mainly through the informal domestic workers. Aja and Alonso (ibid) show that, as many immigrant men in Spain lost their jobs, women became more active in search of employment in the more feminized sectors of the labour market. As a result, they sought to develop and mobilize their linguistic skills to commodify their domestic labour, which in turn destabilized the established gender roles in the community. In Excerpt 1 Nadia explained the pressure posed on the female immigrants' shoulders during the economic crisis and how she passed through a de-classing process by means of gatekeeping and de-capitalization of her other educational and linguistic skills. Similarly, below the experience of Fariha (28 at the time of the interview) shows how the organization of gender roles was challenged by the current economic crisis:

Excerpt 4.

Fariha: He doesn't look for a job, he never goes out of the town. He meets people in the bar, he hears people talking that there is no job, he says that even the Spanish are unemployed. He has a lot of unemployed Moroccan friends and he just doesn't look for a job, he says that there is no job, that's it. When I have time I look for a job on internet for him and that's right. There is no job for men.

Tulay: How do you find a job then, when your husband can't find a job?

Fariha: I find, how do you call it *enchufado*.² @@ I have another job, for example, through a newspaper announcement. My neighbours help me. I pay them five euros and they put my announcement on the newspaper weekly. Many people called me through that announcement. I gave an announcement for my husband, as a gardener. But nearly nobody calls him.

(Interview with Fariha, December 2013 Barcelona, my translation from Spanish and Catalan)

Fariha's experience suggests that women stepped out of their traditional roles and they joined the formal labour market as a result of changing labour demands. Furthermore, she gives specific details about how she used her linguistic skills in order to look for a job. She used internet to find a job for herself and for her husband, she checked newspaper announcements and used her social network to get access to the Catalan labour market. More interestingly, she used her Spanish and Catalan language skills strategically during this process. She used a local newspaper to advertise herself as a domestic worker, and she followed Spanish and Catalan online job search websites. Therefore, the way she mobilized her linguistic skills suggests that language was used to commodify her traditionally feminized skills (note that she was looking for job calls such as cleaning, cooking, domestic work, care-taker, personal assistant... etc.) by means of using the legitimate forms of language. Nevertheless, as I explained briefly in the experience of Aisha (Excerpt 3), linguistic knowledge of domestic workers was subject to under-valuation. Below you will see how Fariha had minimum interaction with the lady in whose house she worked as a personal assistant during six months:

Excerpt 5.

Watch television. We were watching TV movies together, hours and hours. She wanted me to sit next to her, without any conversation. She loved TV programs from Andalusia, and we sometimes talked about these programs. That's it. Only television (...) I was bored at home with her. Sometimes I was talking on the phone with my husband or with my family or I was talking to my family on internet, she told me "No, Fariha, no. Come here, you will watch TV with me. Your work is not there in the computer; your job is being here with me.

(Interview with Fariha, December 2013 Barcelona. My translation from Spanish and Catalan)

2 In the Spanish employment context *enchufe* is a colloquial way of referring to having connections or having somebody to help you to get a job.

Among all the jobs she achieved, Fariha's work experience with this elderly lady from Andalusia was the most active one in terms of exposure to language. It is very interesting that, although she had been studying Catalan for nearly 3 years at the time of the interview; her code-switching habits showed that she spoke Spanish far better than Catalan. When I asked her the reason, she told me that it was because she was exposed to Spanish nearly ten hours a day during six months, as her employer wanted her to watch all Spanish TV channels with her. Their daily routine showed that they had very little conversation, although they lived in the same house. Their main common activity was watching television, and her main work responsibility was to sit next to her for hours. This experience suggests that female care workers may be expected to behave as passive receivers rather than active speakers of the language, even in the personal care jobs that involve communication.

The excerpts in this section together with the experience of Nadia (Excerpt 1) indicate that structural changes in the Spanish labour market triggered the reorganisation of gender roles within the immigrant families. Female labour was commodified to sustain the family and language was used as a tool, as a means to perform this commodification. In the process female immigrants used their linguistic skills in different ways. First, they used it to establish or expand the social network that they needed to get into the feminized job market. Second, they mobilised their linguistic knowledge to get access to other skills and information that could also be commodified. They participated in training programs and they obtained certificates and diplomas on elderly or children health care, ironing, geriatrics and many other feminized skills. The experience of Nadia and Fariha shows that, while the feminized skills of immigrant women were being commodified in the Spanish job market, their other educational and linguistic skills were de-valued. As a lawyer and a speaker of French, Nadia was not able to convert these skills into a commodity and she was forced to professional and social de-classing during her migration trajectory. Her Spanish skills, over the years, have helped her to re-build her curriculum as a care worker, and therefore in her trajectory obtaining Spanish language skills eventually led her to professional de-classing.

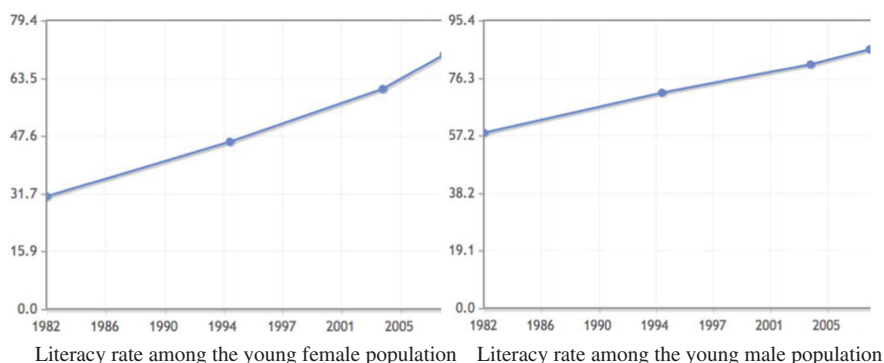
The trajectories of the informants suggest that language acts as an empowering as well as a disempowering tool. Considering the economic power that they gained, their language skills enabled them to be visible actors in the job market. They used the language to resist the economic crisis, and their economic activity as workers challenged the traditional family organization and the status of men as the main breadwinners. On the other hand, this commodification of female immigrant labour reproduced the patriarchal order that locates women in the private space. Although they were paid workers and active parts of the

formal economy, female immigrants substituted the care duties of white western women, whose emancipation brought about the oppression of immigrant women.

5 Moving across the socially constructed gender roles: Language as a means of oppression or emancipation

While difference and identity are now central to feminist theorizing, the relationship between difference and identity has recently led to feminist criticisms (McLaughlin 2003:11). Critiques of postmodern accounts of the construction of identity claim that the monopoly of postmodernism on “theorizing diversity and complexity” is dangerous for feminist theory and activism (Jackson 2001) because in the postmodern construction of identity it is culture that dominates over a materially and sociologically embedded concern with social construction. This criticism and call for a material turn in feminist studies (Mies 1980; Federici 2004) holds the idea that isolating the feminist analysis from ‘boring old school’ materialist analysis is problematic because a contextual analysis of institutions and structures that produce subjectivity are needed in order to understand the articulations of difference and identity (McLaughlin 2003:14). For instance, transnational feminism suggested strategies for bringing together questions of identity with material conditions (Kaplan 1996). Therefore, global patterns of colonization, exchange and hegemony are connected with local acts of identity formation. As Grewal and Kaplan (1994) suggest, transnational feminism adopts postmodernism’s concerns with difference and location, but it criticizes its inability to link them to the effects of mobile capital on multiple subjectivities. Similarly, Bannerji (1995) criticizes the postmodernist account of constructing identity and argues that when materially and sociologically embedded concerns with social construction is left out, re-organizing social relations of inequality becomes peripheral to the main project. In this paper I also suggest focusing on the material questions and complex hegemonies that intersect language repertoires of transnational female speakers and underline longitudinal processes that trigger emancipation or resistance as a response to these hegemonies. Therefore, in this section I shall focus on the specific ways that language and ascribed gender roles interwine, and how the linguistic repertoire was mobilized especially by divorced immigrant women to achieve emancipation.

In the life trajectories of my informants, one of the most important gender inequalities was regarding their access to education in both Morocco and Spain. In these countries, socially constructed gender roles hindered their learning process in different ways. As I explained before, in the Madrid and Barcelona settings most elderly women did not know the Arabic alphabet nor did they read or write in the Latin script. The chart below, which indicates the literacy rate of Morocco over the last decades, suggests that literacy rate is highly gendered (Source: United Nations Educational) in Morocco:



Although these charts indicate that the gap between the sexes is decreasing, in contemporary Morocco the literacy rate among the male population is still higher and most of the young females are still subject to under-education. Below, Hayat (24 at the time of the interview in 2012) explains how she was left out from the school system in Morocco, while her brothers received formal education:

Excerpt 6.

- Tulay:** Then all your brothers went to school. Then all your siblings went to school except for you?
- Hayat:** = yes yes yes. Except for me.
- Tulay:** Didn't you tell (them) you wanted to study?
- Hayat:** Yes yes yes I want. But I couldn't do anything because I (was) little and I was the only girl. There was no other daughter to help my mother at home.

Hayat's parents established gender roles among their children in a very traditional way. While the boys went to school, she was to stay home and do the domestic

work. This practice was very common especially among the families with scarce economic resources (note that Hayat was born in a rural area in Nador city, and her parents lived on agriculture) and the learners who belonged to lower-class families tended to receive no formal education or only primary school education in Morocco. When these agents immigrated to Spain, this asymmetry was reinforced by the gender roles ascribed by other social actors. Female new speakers are far behind the male population in Spanish and Catalan learning process, given that they usually immigrate to Spain after their spouses (note that most of the female immigrants marry Moroccan immigrants who are already settled in Spain). Although these traditionally ascribed gender roles are increasingly challenged, most of the immigrant women are still meant to stay in the private sphere, dealing with the housework and the children. Although the separation between public and private sphere was not always imposed by the immigrant males, gender role division among these families favours the linguistic socialization of men rather than women. Below Karima (30 at the time of the interview in 2013) explains her first months in Catalonia:

Excerpt 7.

Cry, cry, and cry. I cried all the time when I first came to this town. I don't know anybody, I don't have family. I cry, cry and cry. I cry in the balcony. I get bored and I go to living room, cry again. Then I go to bedroom and cry there. These are my first months in Catalonia.

(Interview with Karima, December 2013, Catalonia.

My translation from Catalan.)

Karima explains that during the first months she had difficulties in adapting to the life style in Catalonia because she was not used to living as a core family, far away from her family and friends. Her first months in Catalonia also coincided with her first pregnancy and therefore she could not attend the language classes in the town. After suffering from linguistic and social isolation during the first years, she started learning Catalan when her child started school because she realized that she needed the language to communicate with the school network of her child. The experience of Karima and other informants indicate that gender roles and linguistic agencies might show important changes after the adaptation period. Although the traditionally constructed gender roles hinder the active participation of the immigrant women in linguistic socialization and in the job market; social and economic demands in Spain make the female immigrants use their linguistic skills in order to adapt to their new lives in Spain. For instance, the school network of the second generation and the Europeization of the life-style require more independent female immigrants who need the linguistic

knowledge in order to lead a better life in Spain. Below Imane (24 at the time of the interview in 2012) explains how she was obliged to learn the language:

Excerpt 8.

The first time I arrived here, I needed to do everything alone. For that reason I started learning Spanish in the NGO. My husband told me that he could not come with me to shopping, to the pharmacy, to visit the doctor. He can only be with me on Saturdays and Sundays. Rest of the time I need to do everything alone.

(Interview with Imane, July 2012, Madrid. My translation from Spanish.)

Like Imane, the majority of my informants mentioned that they were expected to be more independent agents in the host society, because they were expected to be in charge of the main organizational issues of the family such as shopping, attending the school meetings of their children and going to the hospital. Apart from the changing family structure inside the Moroccan immigrant families, marital status and motherhood were among the most important driving factors that created active new speaker women in Spain. As I mentioned above, although motherhood is a hindrance during the first stage of their immigration trajectory (for instance in Karima's case), school age children are important agents that establish the link between their mothers and the legitimate language. This link means that the mothers need to be active new speakers to attend the school meetings and other school events of their children. The networks developed through their children's schools also played a crucial role regarding the language motivation of the female immigrants. In some cases, the children also acted as teachers of the legitimate language (see also: Llompart 2013).

Besides, the most active new speakers in both sites were divorced working women, most of whom were also distant mothers. After they got divorced, they preferred to stay in Spain rather than going back to Morocco, especially if they were from families with serious economic difficulties. During my fieldwork I interviewed four divorced women who, after getting divorced, found a job and started to lead an economically independent life in Spain. For example, Hayat (24) started learning Spanish shortly after she got divorced and started looking for a job in the meantime. For her, learning the Spanish language was an investment which enabled her to stay in Madrid with her only child. Similarly, Kadija (32 at the time of the fieldwork in 2012) was also a divorced woman and a distant mother who needed to cover the school expenses of her son in Morocco. She was sharing a flat with other Latin American immigrants, and she was one of the most fluent learners in the classroom. She worked in a restaurant in Madrid as a cook and her linguistic socialization at work and at home was in the

Spanish language. Below she explains how she is planning to mobilize her linguistic skills to improve her living conditions:

Excerpt 9.

I really want to have a university degree to have a better life and more money. I don't want to work in this restaurant all my life, I need a better job to bring my son here. I don't have anyone to take care of him in Madrid and I don't have money for baby sitters. In order to achieve a better life, I need a university degree and for that reason I need to speak better Spanish.

(Fieldwork notes in the classroom, 12.05.2012, Madrid)

This excerpt reveals how the immigrant women mobilize their linguistic skills in order to reach higher formal education and to obtain better economic status in Spain. In divorced women's trajectories, language was defined as a vital instrument for maintaining their lives in Spain, suggesting that they used this capital as an emancipation instrument. Therefore, while there is a gender asymmetry regarding the access to formal education and linguistic capital both in Morocco and Spain, immigrant women could overcome these asymmetries in receiving countries and they strived to accumulate this capital to be socially and economically independent agents.

6 Conclusions and further discussions

In this article I explained the process of becoming a new speaker from a longitudinal perspective. The qualitative data show some of the ways in which transnational movements transform new speaker profiles in the receiving countries. The fact that an important number of Riffian language speakers were learning Castilian in Madrid and Darija speakers were learning Catalan in Barcelona indicate that in the globalized world so-called *regional* or *national* languages are now claimed and spoken by diverse profiles. On the other hand, qualitative data also suggest that the legitimate language is still used by the state of origin and by the receiving states to reinforce social inequalities and to impose nation-building ideologies on the immigrant population. For instance, Riffian speakers coming from the northern rural areas of Morocco suffered from reproduction of these inequalities both in Morocco and in Spain. On the other hand, it was also shown that learners received contradictory demands from the legitimate speakers (of Spanish and Catalan) regarding which linguistic form (globalized or localized) they should adopt.

Furthermore, the social positioning of the learners played an important role regarding how they constructed their new speaker agencies and how their linguistic skills were valued in the linguistic market. Comparison between the learners belonging to middle class families to the lower class learners indicate that social class plays a key role especially regarding the initial phase of language learning, given that most of the middle class immigrants had started learning Spanish (and other European languages) in Morocco. On the other hand, the professional and linguistic trajectories of the informants who had studied higher education in Morocco indicate that the linguistic skills of these new speakers were under-valued. After being subject to gatekeeping in their job seeking process, these new speakers mobilized their Spanish and/or Catalan skills in order to find lower profile jobs which eventually led to a social and professional de-classing.

Tracing the linguistic trajectories of the agents in a longitudinal way indicate that becoming a new speaker affects multiple axes of hegemonies. Ethno-linguistic group of origin, social class before and after migration and ascribed gender roles have been mentioned as interconnected hegemonies that shape the linguistic agencies of the learners. On the other hand, there is a need to underline that there is a space for resistance. Becoming an active new speaker may challenge socially constructed hierarchies such as the patriarchal division of gender roles. Learners may also use their linguistic knowledge to adjust to dynamic economic conditions or to lead an independent life as a divorced or single woman in Spain. Acquiring linguistic competence of Spanish, or both Catalan and Spanish (that is, the local forms of linguistic capital) became instrumental especially for divorced women in the process of gaining independence and developing the skills necessary to access specific market niches. The positions that were available to them however followed the logic of social and linguistic hierarchies, which meant that both educated and non-educated women had to invest in the low-level jobs typically associated with domestic labour and care. Therefore, although the female immigrants used their linguistic skills as a tool for emancipation, they were still constructed as low-profile workers in Spain, no matter what their educational, social and economic background was.

In conclusion, a longitudinal, materially-oriented ethnographic approach to the new speaker phenomenon enables us to explain how individuals develop particular trajectories in their lives and it also makes it possible to examine issues of identity, difference and social class in the analysis. There is a need for further research to explain the specific processes through which immigrant communities mobilize their language repertoire to maintain or challenge the hierarchical divisions and asymmetries. Longitudinal, agency-oriented

approaches that take into account material concerns in transnational language repertoires might shed light on the questions of multilingualism, new speakerhood and globalization in late capitalism.

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Bionote

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